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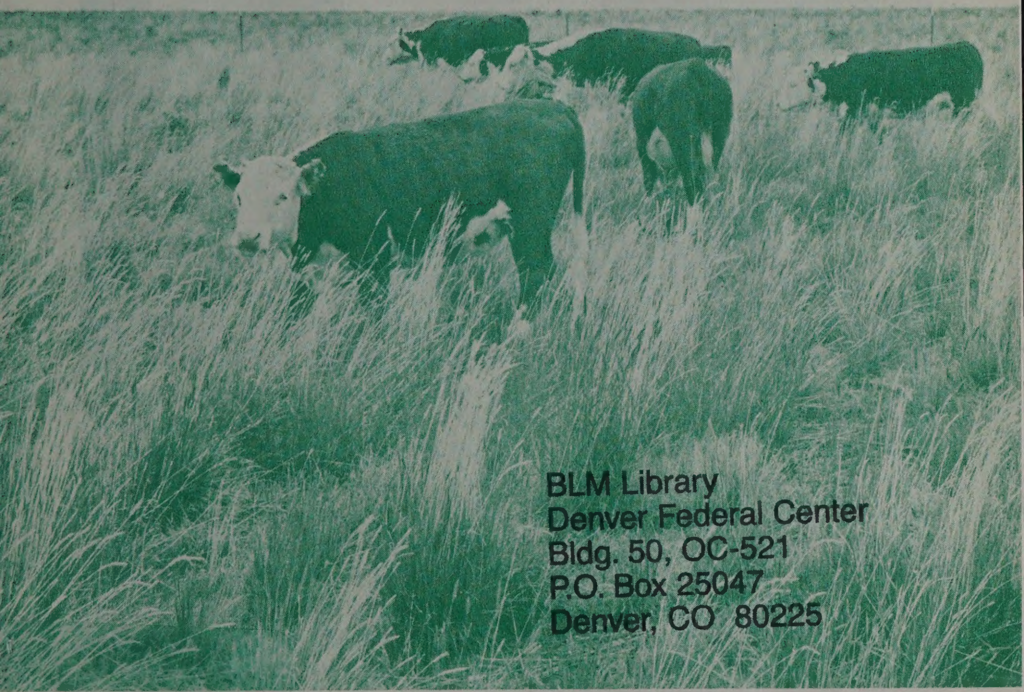
LIVESTOCK GRAZING



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

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MANAGED USE OF RANGE LAND

Plants are renewable resources as long as we manage and harvest them properly. Just as you depend upon plant life directly or indirectly for food, so do animals. Forest and range grasses provide important forage or food for cattle and sheep.

It is important to maintain plant cover on the land to keep soil in place and to provide for the needs of the animals and people using the land.

A good range manager cares for land and uses it economically to get the highest continuous yield of animal products, wildlife and recreation without endangering the forage, soil and water resources. Wide use increases the livestock and wildlife that land can support, increases its water-holding capacity, controls soil erosion and evens out the stream flow on watersheds.

Several things must be done to have productive and useful rangelands.

First — Good management must be continued on land that is in good to excellent condition.

Second — Management must be improved on land that is in fair to good condition. This may mean fencing, water developments, better stock salting practices, changing the season of grazing, or decreasing the number of animals using the area.

Third — Land that is in fair to poor condition needs all these things and, in addition, must be restored by seeding, controlling competing plants or letting the land rest.

Several steps are important in proper range management. They include:

Inventory — What is on the range?
Evaluation — What is it good for?
Study — What is happening to it?
Making Plans — What to do about it?

The Bureau of Land Management, in cooperation with range users on the national resource lands, develops programs or plans to improve vegetation. The basis of these plans is the proper timing of the movement of grazing animals in accordance with the needs of the vegetation for their life processes. This is called "manipulation."

Through proper manipulation of grazing animals, desirable plants for livestock forage, wildlife habitat and the watershed are improved and maintained.

The *first* step in developing these plans — called Allotment Management Plans (AMP) — is to gather basic data and analyze the land area. The analysis must consider the effects vegetation changes will have upon the food and living space requirements of individual wildlife species as well as the effects these changes will have upon livestock production, soil protection, water quality, and natural beauty. Resource use needs, social, economic and other factors must also be considered.

After a complete analysis, the *next* step is to determine the specific objectives to be accomplished in the allotment. An appropriate objective might be to improve food such as bitterbrush for mule deer in a particular area.

A grazing system is then developed to accomplish the objectives. The grazing system should allow for sufficient rest for the plants from grazing to give the important plants the opportunity to produce seed and to increase in vigor. This also produces additional food volume. Grazing by livestock is then scheduled to trample the ripe seed into the ground and follow-up rest permits seedling establishment.

Continuous studies, evaluations and necessary adjustments are made throughout the life of the plan to ensure the objectives are accomplished.

WILDLIFE

When deer are present on the range year-round, major use is usually during the winter months when snow forces additional animals down from higher elevations.

To maintain a healthy deer herd, it is important that enough food and proper living space be provided. This is done through the Allotment Management Plan. Plant species that provide food and habitat are identified and their growth requirements are determined.

Livestock grazing use can be controlled so that the species of plants used by wildlife obtain proper growth and produce the maximum food needed. Grazing adjustments can be made to reduce the competition between the wildlife and livestock.

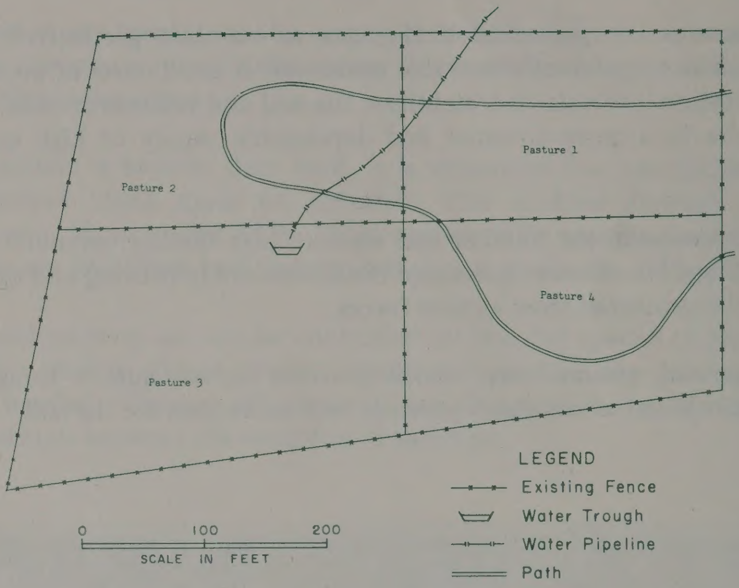
WATERSHED PROTECTION

Soils must be protected if they are to maintain productivity and continue to produce renewable resources. A good cover of perennial vegetation protects and stabilizes the soil and reduces erosion. This results in a more constant and dependable supply of high quality water.

An increase in the number and vigor of high quality perennial plant seedlings is evidence that range conditions are improving and the soil will be protected from erosive forces.

In general, ground cover which provides highest quality forage for livestock and wildlife also provides best protection for the soil.

FARRAGUT ALLOTMENT



The demonstration allotment at Farragut is divided into four pastures. The pastures are grazed in the following sequence. The first year the pasture is grazed all season. The second year it is rested. The third year it is rested until seed ripe time, then it is grazed the second half of the season to plant the grass seeds by livestock trampling. The fourth year it is rested all season.

Livestock use at the correct time scatters the seed and tramples it into the soil. Rest the following year allows new seedlings to become established. It also allows older plants to regain strength and rebuild their root systems. Some forage remains on the soil surface as litter. This aids in protecting the soil from erosion. By providing ample grass for cattle they do not feed on plants as heavily as they normally would. The forage on the pastures being rested is available for the use of wildlife.

Timing and length of rest is determined by the plant growth requirements of the important vegetation species. Some species need two growing seasons to produce seed. In addition, climatic factors and the condition of the range play an important role.

GRAZING SCHEDULE

FOR FARRAGUT ALLOTMENT

First Year

Graze all season.

Second Year

Rest all season to establish grass seedlings, increase plant vigor, and protect soil.

Third Year

Rest until seed is ripe. Graze second half of season to plant seed by livestock trampling.

Fourth Year

Rest all season to establish grass seedlings, increase plant vigor, and protect soil.

BENEFITS

Changes in the plant cover on rangelands may take place very slowly and are influenced by the weather and actions by nature or man. In order to put proper rangeland management plans into effect, it is some times necessary to construct fences and develop water supplies. In some areas it is necessary to improve range conditions through land treatment. These practices include control of brush that would crowd out existing grass and seeding areas to establish grass.

If rangelands are properly managed, they have the best forage plants or mixture of plants that the climate and soil will support in that location. These plants are able to compete with each other for space, light and moisture.

Each grass, forb or shrub can be properly grazed without harming its production. In addition to increasing use by domestic livestock, the maintenance of vigorous plants and evenly distributed supplies of clean water prove beneficial to wildlife. Streams are then kept free of excessive sediment. In addition, this can improve public recreation opportunities.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION

As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, land, mineral, fish, wildlife, forest, range, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources."

The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States — now and in the future.

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